

HOUSEDUST MITE CONTROL MEASURES

House dust mites require humidity (>50% relative humidity) and warmth (>70°F) to grow. Because mites avoid the light and because surfaces dry out rapidly, mites flourish in mattresses, bedding, upholstered furniture, carpets, pillows, and quilts. Under very humid conditions mites will also grow in clothing, curtains (drapes), and any material.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

1. Mattresses and pillows should be enclosed in a zippered, plastic cover or a special vapor-permeable, allergen-proof fabric. Damp wipe the mattress cover every two weeks.
2. Wash all bedding, including mattress pad, pillow cases, and blankets, in hot-cycle (~130°F) **weekly**. Comforters should be made of nonallergenic material (dacron, orlon) and should be washed **monthly**.
3. Small objects that accumulate dust, such as knickknacks, books, stuffed animals, and CD collections, should be placed in drawers or closed cabinets. Clothing should be stored in drawers enclosed in plastic or in a closed closet. Store out-of-season clothing away from the bedroom.
4. Carpets should be vacuumed weekly using a vacuum cleaner with an efficient bag reservoir. The mite sensitive person should avoid vacuuming if possible or wear a mask during the process. Leaving the house for 30 minutes after vacuuming allows time for dust mite allergens to settle.

MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES

1. Removing carpeting from the bedroom makes it easier to control mites. Carpeting is difficult to clean and will tend to grow and maintain a constant population of mites especially in humid seasons or if installed over cement slab/basement.
2. Washable cotton curtains or mini-blinds are easier to clean and maintain than curtains or drapes.
3. Control humidity in the house below 50% at all times. Central air conditioning in the summer and dehumidifiers in the basement are helpful. Humidification of heated air in the winter should be done carefully to avoid excess.